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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004584

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SUBJECT: NINEWA: SINJAR ANOTHER KRG OUTPOST

Classified By: Classified by Ninewa PRT Leader James Knight: 1.4 (B) and (D).

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The mayor of the Ninewa district of Sinjar believes that his district will vote to join Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) controlled provinces, if a referendum on disputed territories is held. The leadership in his district is dominated by Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) members and the district receives a great deal of support from the KRG. The KRG has recently provided 2000 teachers to Sinjar and proposed the construction of more than 100 schools. It remains unclear how much influence and control these Kurdish elements have over their primarily Sunni Arab majority. END SUMMARY.

SINJAR WILL JOIN THE KRG

¶2. (C) On 6 December, PRT Team Leader Knight and PRT IPAO Holtsnider met Dakheel Qassim Hason, the mayor of the Sinjar district in Ninewa province, Adelhameed Qasim Younis, the mayor of Qayrawan subdistrict, and a number of Sinjar's district councilmen, including the district council chairman, Wase Nayif Badal. Hason stated that more than eighty percent of his district would vote to join the KRG in an Article 140 disputed territories referendum. He did note that he was a KDP member and that such an outcome in a referendum would strongly benefit him.

¶3. (C) Hason stated that before a referendum proceeds, he expects that a naturalization process) the standard procedure under Iraqi law -- will take place in which former residents of the district may return and be granted voting rights. He also notes that a census will have to occur before any referendum or election could be considered valid.

SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF KRG SUPPORT

¶4. (C) In the meeting with the leaders of Sinjar district, several of them mentioned that Sinjar lacks enough qualified teachers. Badal asserted that Sinjar needs 1500 teachers, of which we have only been provided 700.8 When pressed by the IPAO about rumors of Kurdish schoolteachers, Hason explained that 2000 teachers were provided by the KRG to the district of Sinjar. He further noted that these teachers

report to the Ministry of Education in the KRG rather than the Ministry of Education in Baghdad. The mayor also discussed future plans for the construction of 106 KRG-funded schools. When Hason was asked about the language of instruction, he reiterated that the choice of language of instruction was a choice made by the students; he agreed that some schools taught in Kurdish exclusively, but he said that many taught both Kurdish and Arabic. Interestingly, the KRG only assisted with improvements for existing schools that had Kurdish as one of the languages of instruction. Badal later added that many of the schools also offer English as a language of instruction.

15. (C) The Team Leader proceeded to question Sinjar,s leadership about other KRG support and was answered with a list of projects that the KRG has supported within the Sinjar district. Hason said that the KRG has assisted with wells, conference hall construction, distribution of drinking water, and paying the salaries of unemployed workers.

KURDISH PRESENCE UNELECTED

16. (C) The mayor of Sinjar insisted that he was elected on April 23, 2003; when queried about how he had been elected when no elections had been held, he answered that he had been elected by the district council. This method of election is a common feature of other KDP dominated districts, such as Shikhan. Of note was the fact that Hason also has a picture of Mahmoud Barzani, the current leader of the KDP,s father who was killed, prominently displayed on the wall behind his desk.

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LACK OF ELECTRICITY CAUSE FOR COMPLAINT

17. (C) In the cold and shadowy meeting room, members of Sinjar,s council expressed their displeasure with Ninewa,s electrical distribution. They noted that electricity to Sinjar has been unavailable for the past several weeks. When asked why this was the case, Younis explained that insurgents had repeatedly destroyed portions of the electrical infrastructure. He stressed his displeasure with Ninewa province,s inability to supply his district with electricity on a continuous basis.

COMMENT

18. (C) The support that Sinjar receives from the KRG could lead to an increase in Kurdish power in Ninewa province. Given that an Article 140 disputed territories commission office has been established in Sinjar, this recently increased support may also presage a strong cultural push to linguistically and politically dominate the disputed territories ahead of a referendum. Hason, despite his evasiveness when questioned about KRG support, seemed to be fairly honest in his assessment of his district; at this point, it seems likely that Sinjar will vote to join the KRG.

END COMMENT.
KHALILZAD